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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DAKAR 000641

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [PU](#)
SUBJECT: GUINEA BISSAU:TENSIONS RISING - ELECTIONS IN
QUESTION

Classified By: Charge Jay T. Smith for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) President Vieira signed a law granting an extended mandate to the National Popular Assembly (ANP) and the Government under pressure from the military. Such military involvement in politics is growing and raising alarms among neighboring countries. Elections scheduled for November are far from financed and GOGB insistence on costly and logistically challenging biometric registration may mean a delay or cancellation. Security sector reform moves forward under EU leadership now that a partial census has been completed but the Judicial Police operations remain shuttered. The GOGB's "show me the money" attitude is hampering democratic development. End summary.

TENSIONS RISING

2. (U) President Joao Bernardo "Nino" Vieira signed into law an extension of the ANP's mandate until such time as new legislative elections are held. The law was initiated by the ANP to grant it and the Government legitimacy because their mandate ended in April. Legislative elections should have taken place in spring 2008 but lack of organization and funding has pushed the date back to November. Now the law must go to the Supreme Court to determine its constitutionality. The President of the Association of Guinean Judges, Ansumane Sanha, told the press judges were receiving death threats in an effort to influence the upcoming hearing.

3. (C) According to the press and Representative of the UN Secretary General Shola Omoregie (protect), Vieira was compelled to sign the law by Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Batista Tagme Na Waie. Tagme or his close advisors communicated to Vieira in the days before his April 22 visit to the Gambia that if he did not sign the legislation the Armed Forces would foment riots in his absence then declare martial law to keep the peace.

4. (C) Even before this episode, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) members were concerned about Tagme's manipulation by political actors and his increasingly high-profile role in politics. In early March, ECOWAS delegates from Nigeria and Burkina Faso traveled to Bissau to ask Tagme to lower his political profile, according to

Aphonso Te (protect), a businessman and ex-military officer familiar with the exchange.

ELECTIONS

15. (U) Legislative elections have been set by President Vieira for November 16. An inter-ministerial commission has decided on biometric registration, according to UN Development Program (UNDP) chief Josepina Mazza, because it will reduce fraud. The UNDP supports the GOGB's decision to go with biometric registration even though no sufficient funding or donated equipment has yet been identified to carry it out. With a price tag around USD 7 million, only USD 600,000 has been donated so far from the European Union. The UN Peace Building Commission is expected to contribute an additional USD 1.3 million and bilateral donors may still make contributions as well, however all indications are that Guinea-Bissau will fall far short of the mark.

16. (U) The decision to use biometrics) regardless of the inability to pay for it) has caused some civil society members to raise concerns that equipment would be unreliable during the rainy season in remote villages with poor access to electricity. Undaunted by these logistical problems, Prime Minister Martinho N'Dafa Cabi told members of the diplomatic corps that biometric registration should begin July 1.

MILITARY CENSUS COMPLETED

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17. (U) UNDP conducted Guinea-Bissau's first-ever census of men and women in the military. UNDP Director Mazza told Poloff there were approximately 4,500 members (Note: the official report has not been made available yet and she did not have the exact number at her fingertips). The number was a bit lower than previous estimates by the Armed Forces but Mazza said the number is not as worrying as the structure. Most of those soldiers are officers, giving the military an inverted organizational structure from the way it should be to operate effectively. Most high-level officers told UNDP researchers they would not retire without a guaranteed pension.

18. (U) Colonel Joao Cuoto, Armed Forces Advisor for the European Union's Security Sector Reform technical team told Poloff a second census would be started this summer to count the number of "antigas competentes," the men who fought for Guinea-Bissau's independence from Portugal in the early 1970s. Antigas competentes were never properly demobilized and in many cases still have weapons and know how to use them. Col. Cuoto said that any security sector reform effort must incorporate them if it is to effectively reduce the risk of future instability. The EU team's reform plan calls for no more than 2,500 soldiers, significant training and equipment, and a consolidation of the number of police and state security forces.

JUDICIAL POLICE NOT WORKING

19. (U) Minister of Defense Carmelita Pires told Poloff the Judicial Police, which have responsibility for investigating drug trafficking, terrorism, and other transnational crime, will not return to work until the "minimum conditions" have been met for them to operate. Pires announced the work stoppage last month after a policeman was hauled from protective custody out of Judicial Police (JP) HQ, then tortured and killed by the Rapid Reaction Squad of the Public Order Police (POP). The POP officers were reacting to the killing of one of their own by the JP officer who accidentally shot his friend after a night of drinking.

¶10. (U) When pressed on what constituted "minimum conditions" Pires indicated the international community and bilateral donors had obligations to provide material and training to the JP. Part of that expectation may be based on the elaborate plans underway to shore up Guinea-Bissau's counter-drug efforts spearheaded by the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The UNODC project has raised some funds for its anti-drug trafficking and judicial sector reform program including material, training, and new headquarters for the JP but the program has not yet started on the ground in Bissau. Pires told Poloff that of all the donors who promised to support the UNODC project at the donor's conference in Lisbon last December, only the United States has not provided its contribution (USD 150,000 from INCLE pipeline).

COMMENT

¶11. (C) With the hard-headed insistence on biometric voter registration despite lack of funds, infrastructure or time, it appears the GOGB is planning to fail. Letting elections slip beyond November would serve the current government, which is comprised of the three major political parties, as well as the ANP. Only Vieira and a few outsiders like Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC) leader Carlos Gomes Jr. and PAIGC contender Malam Bacai Sanha would like to see elections come sooner. If the Supreme Court provides legitimacy to the ANP's self-serving extension of mandate, there will be little pressure from any quarter) save the international community) to hold elections in November. What pressure there is may matter little if Tagme and the military are not pro-election.

¶12. (C) The refusal to stage low-cost elections and also to allow the Judicial Police to stop work indicates the GOGB is willing to hold what should be its own national interests)

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i.e. democratic institutions and public security) hostage to wrangle cash from international donors.

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